

#### **IV. B. 8. Important Forestlands**

- a) Background. The Farmland Protection Policy Act (Public Law 98-98) became effective on December 22, 1981,

“.....to minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses, and to assure that Federal programs are administered in a manner that, to the extent practicable, will be compatible with State, unit of local government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland.”

The Farmland Protection Policy Act was set up to protect significant forestlands in private ownership as well as important farmland resources.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture passed its implementing regulation, Departmental Regulation DR 9500-3, “Land Use Policy”, shortly thereafter and assigned primary technical responsibility to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS in turn established the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system for use in the technical evaluation of proposed Federal actions which could result in the conversion of important private forestlands of the United States. LESA was also intended to serve as a model for adoption by State and local governments in creating their own private forestland protection systems. Rural Development environmental reviewers are expected to use the LESA system in analyzing private forestland conversion impacts of proposed Rural Development actions.

The intent of the LESA system analytical process is to not adversely impact the most important forestlands in private ownership unless there is no practical alternative and not to serve as a draconian measure over State and local land use planning goals.



- b) Governing Regulations.



- (1) Federal.
  - (a) U.S. Department of Agriculture, Departmental Regulation 9500-3, Land Use Policy.
  - (b) Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended, (PL 93-378).
  - (c) Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978 (PL 95-306).
  - (d) Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (PL 94-579).
  - (e) Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality.
  - (f) Title 7, Part 1b and 1c, Code of Federal Regulations, U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Environmental Policy Act.
  - (g) National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321.
- (2) State.
  - (a) Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 36, Article 7.
  - (b) Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 23, Article 30.
  - (c) Colorado's Constitution, Article XVIII, Section 6.
- c) Policy. Rural Development should advocate the retention of important forestlands whenever conversions to other uses are proposed, unless other needs clearly override the benefits derived from retention of such lands. The Nation's forestlands are unique natural resources providing fiber and wood necessary for the continued welfare of the people of the United States and protection from floods. Each year, large amounts of this land are converted to other uses.

Continued conversion of the Nation's forestlands may impair the ability of the United States to produce sufficient fiber and wood to meet domestic needs and the demands of export markets.

Rural Development should not authorize, fund, or carry out a proposed action (1) involving the conversion of a forestland or (2) adversely affecting the unique values and benefits of forestlands unless there is clearly no practical alternative to the action. Whenever a proposed action is determined to have the potential for impacting a forestland, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and/or the Colorado State Forest Service should be



consulted, as appropriate, early in the environmental impact analysis process to evaluate the possible consequences of and protective requirements necessary concerning the action.

d) Classification.

- (1) Prime timberland.
- (2) Unique timberland.
- (3) Timberland of statewide importance.
- (4) Timberland of local importance.

e) Agency Jurisdiction.

Confer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, for impacts to National Forests, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, for impacts on public lands, and the Colorado Forest Service (CFS) for impacts to State and private forests managed by the CFS.

Following is Region 2 Office contact information for the U. S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office:

U.S. Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region  
Natural Resources Information  
P.O. Box 25127  
Lakewood, Colorado 80225

Contact: Steve Gregonis, (303) 275-5350

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/>

Information pertinent to U.S. Forest Service field offices for National Forests located in Colorado may be found at the following web-site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/states/co.shtml>

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 8.3 million acres of public lands in Colorado. These lands are managed for a multitude of uses including, but not limited to, recreation, mining, wildlife habitat and livestock grazing. Along with these 8.3 million acres, BLM oversees 27.3 million subsurface acres for mineral development. Following is the Colorado State Office contact for the U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management:



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Colorado State Office  
Natural Resources  
2850 Youngfield Street  
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-7076

Contact: Bob Schmidt, (303) 239-3801.

<http://www.co.blm.gov>

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) provides technical assistance to private landowners. Following is a contact for the main Colorado State Forest Service office at Colorado State University:

Colorado State Forest Service  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523

Contact: Phil Schwolert, (970) 491-6303

<http://www.colostate.edu/depts/csfs/>

Contact information regarding CSFS field office may be obtained at the following web-site:

<http://www.colostate.edu/depts/csfsper.html>

- f) Location of Resource. The primary forest holding in Colorado are maintained by the U.S. Forest Service. These National Forests may be located at the following interactive web-site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/map.shtml>

Information regarding Bureau of Land Management land holdings may be obtained at the following web-site:

<http://www.co.blm.gov>

The Colorado State Forest Service does not maintain land holdings, but rather advises private landowners of forest management practices.



g) Other References.

1) USDA/RUS Environmental Program Library

(Full text of the Farmland Protection Policy Act)

<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/toc.htm#Statutes>

2) USDA/RUS Environmental Program Library

(Full text of Departmental Regulation 9500-3, "*Land Use Policy*")

<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/toc.htm#Regulations>